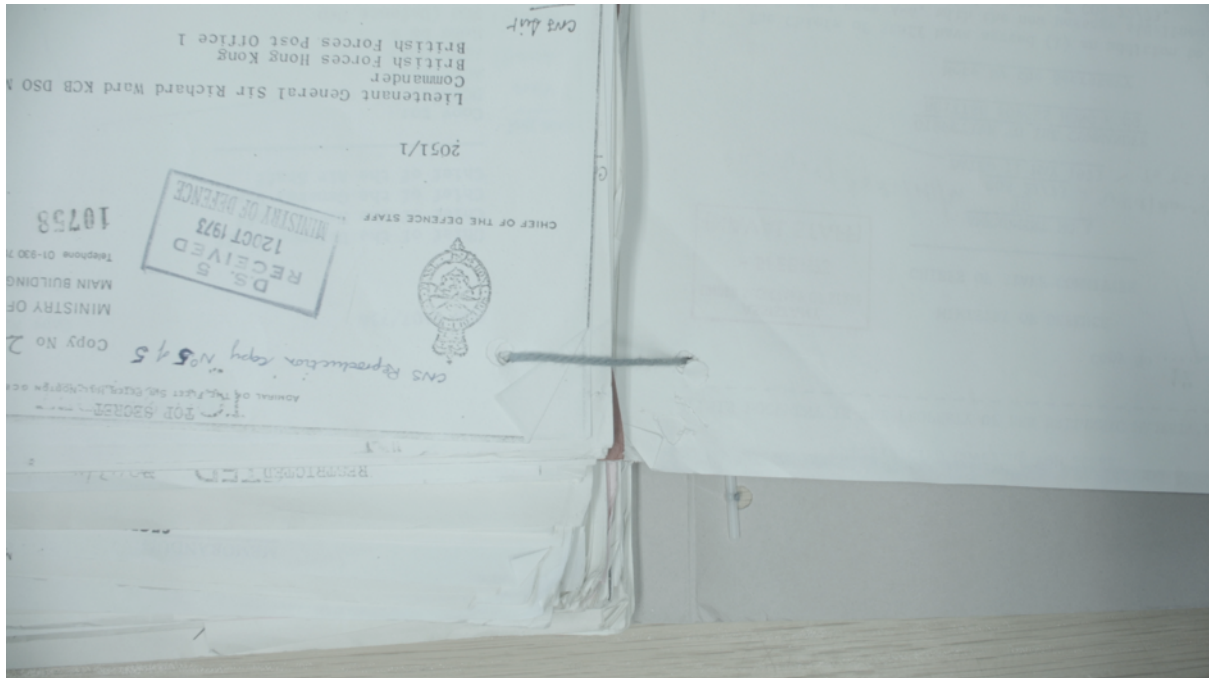


Walking towards the Sun

Project Proposal

Dorothy Cheung



Walking towards the Sun is a 20-minute single channel film essay. It shows individuals who work with archives related to Hong Kong, as a reflection of how history and future, public and personal overlap.

The essay film would document interviews with people working on Hong Kong's colonial archive, alongside with my own narrative in the form of voice-over on my own experience with the content and form of these material. Visually it would show the materiality of the archive as a physical form of memory, and the process of it being transmitted to a digital device, as a metaphor of transformation and transference of memories.



Footages of train journeys as a potential metaphor of the progress of reinventing identity in the film

How do you plan to make it

The first initial research was conducted in London in October 2018 with *Decoding Hong Kong's History*, an initiative that studies previous confidential files on foreign governments' policy on handover. The research includes a series of interviews and fieldwork with the Hong Kong team and London volunteers. The interview would be consciously including people of diverse backgrounds, for instance people who have been working with the archives for over two years, as well as new volunteers who are less familiar with the content of these material.



Screenshot from an interview with two core members

After the first research trip, two more trips are taken to follow up with more interviews and an additional trip to the Northern Ireland. I have interviewed 9 people in total, including some core members of *Decoding Hong Kong's History* and new volunteers. Through spending time with them I acquired personal experience and knowledge that adds another layer to the project.

The film would be edited in a non-linear and fragmented approach, in order to explore how memories work for the audience when they watch a movie – that is, how do people perceive images and put them together in order to make sense of them in their mind, which also resembles the research process with archival materials.

Why do you want to make it

The first time I learned the existence of colonial archives was through facebook, on the page managed by *Decoding Hong Kong's History*. I cannot remember what exactly was the document, but the idea was fascinating in the sense of its historical value, but also the fact that it gives us an exit or escapes to imagine an alternative history.

What strikes me personally, is the fact that in an archive one suggested uprooting the whole Hong Kong population to the Northern Ireland – that resembles a childhood memory that I rarely talked about, since I always thought it was false memory.

Indeed, “the struggle of man against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting.” And this quote from Czech-French Writer Milan Kundera is often being referred in Hong Kong and Taiwan’s social movements as we both experience histories (or presence) of censorship, thus memories become a public issue – and yet personal memories in a way still intertwined (e.g. the June 4 Tiananmen anniversary vigil in Hong Kong – as a way to remember and also create new memories related to an incident), the project would be exploring how these two types of memories are working together or against each other, and in what ways they would echo.



Screenshot from a trip to the National Archive

I see working with archives as a way to envision the future and reflect on the time we live now. Ultimately it is a quest for identity and subjectivity, just like national myths in other countries, Hongkongers are now also reinventing their own versions of myths, in order to reinvent an identity. For instance, Localists are trying to shape Hong Kong as a nation, and Hongkongers as a national identity or even a race, to differentiate themselves from people in PRC. The identity issue has been always underlining in Hong Kong’s popular culture and art but only in recent years, it has been explicitly discussed in the public sphere.

Relation to previous practice

The format of essay film has been an extension from my previous short film – *Letter to the Outsider*, that visually showcases a few repurposed prisons in the Netherlands, with a voice-over that expressed the diasporic experience and reflection of imprisonment after political imprisonment in Hong Kong last year. This new project would be a more direct and explicit exploration towards actual politics and identity issues. Even so some elements would be carried and further explored in this work - like relation of individual to space and history, and essay film as a form/medium.

Meanwhile the film would give voices to other people - literally using their voice as voice-over to the narrative as well. Such practice is rooted in various zine projects I have done in previous years, as well as

a video project titled *Songs from Home*, that involves a few women singing in various spots in Rotterdam and its suburb in their mother tongues.

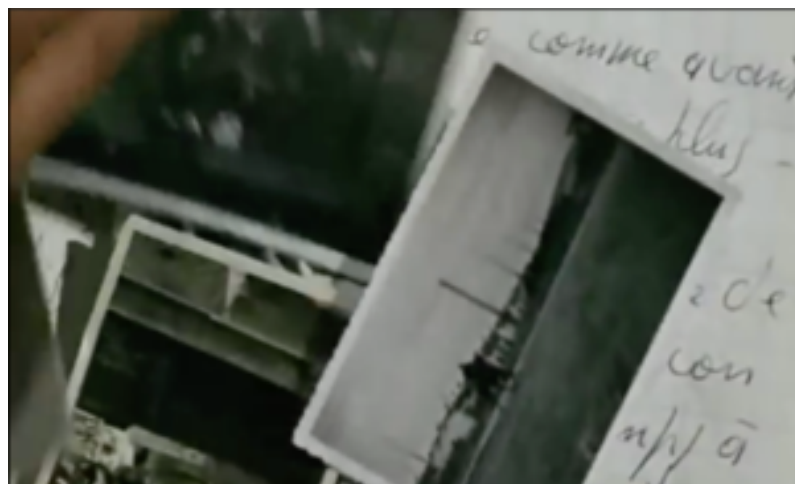


Screenshot from *Songs from Home*

The aim for that mostly is placing the subjects as the same level as me as the filmmaker, sharing the same space to express personal ideas and memories.

Relation to a larger context

I see the project as an extension of various works and films that also explore the notion of memories or archives, especially those of Alain Resnais. I am inspired by few films of him including *Muriel*, or the Time of Return (1963), *Toute la mémoire du monde* (1956) and *Les Statues Meurent Aussi* (1953, with Chris Marker). This project would also question the notions of memories by filming and comparing personal history with histories in a bigger narrative, that is, in the archives.



Screenshot from *Muriel*, or the Time of Return - Alain Resnais(1963)

Taking the film essay as the form, I would also relate the film with essay film format, as well as the form of essay in a broader sense, trying to apply some of the tactics in essay writing, including listing and fragmentation into composing the project.

To relate the film to the actual political situation now in Hong Kong, I also regard the film as one of the post-umbrella movement films, that usually refers to documentaries filmed during the Hong Kong

Umbrella Movement¹ in 2014, even the project would neither illustrate nor show the movement itself. The film, instead, would explore people who choose to turn into history after the movement, and take these people as activists who fight the struggle in the sense of narrative.

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¹ The Umbrella Movement was a 79-day occupation in Hong Kong in demand for free and fair election. People have occupied busiest areas in the city for months with camps and barricades. Despite of the high level of international media attention, the Beijing government refused to grant Hong Kong people universal suffrage, and to many Hong Kong people the movement is considered as a failure.